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Account of Proceedings at a Meeting at STOWMARKET, NOVEMBER 30, 1795.

MEETING having been held at STOWMARKET, in confequence of an Advertisement from the SHERIFF, in which on the 16th of Now. it was unanimously resolved to address the King, in congratulation on his Escape from danger, and resolved, but not nonlisted of 68, or at most of 73 or 4.

A finaller Meeting, in the Name of the COUNTY of SUFFOLK, few probably ever faw: especially when it is consider'd, that the popular copic of a congratulation to the King, was combin'd in the Call, with a merely general intimation of a Petition meant to be brought award for fome Laws which were likely to be less unpopularly recommended the more generally and the more uncertainly intimated. In a similar manner an apparent Approbation has been obtained in various parts of the Kingdom.

However, as these anticipated Recommendations were known in SUFFOLK, as elsewhere, to be designed as Pledges of Approbation to the Two Bills depending in Parliament, which it was believed, in Principle and Duration as to one of them, and in several most important circumstances, and in the extraordinary Provisions of the other, had not been understood such as they truly were, and still are; during the short Deliberation (if Deliberation it could be called) at the Meeting; considering the very imperfect manner in which they were then made known, and the erroneous apprehension of their being (whatever else they might be) merely temporary for the session their passing, which seemed then to have been entertained of them; a Correspondence took place, in consequence of which an ADVERTISEMENT appeared, first in the BURY Paper on Wednesday, Nov. 25, with Six Names, and afterward in the IPSWICH on Saturday the 28th, with additional Names, in these words.

PUBLIC MEETING.

PUBLIC MEETING.

We the underwritten, do hereby request as many of the Inhabitants of this County of Suffolk as disapprove the Principle of the New Treason and Sedition Bill, the mode of limiting its continuance, and its other circumstances, and the extraordinary Provisions of the Public Meeting Bill, to meet at the White Hart at Stowmarket on Monday the 30th inst. at Twelve o'clock, to consider of a Petition against the said Bills."

WILLIAM FONNEREAU, Clk. Ipfwich
CLAUDE W. FONNEREAU, Clk. Ditto
THOMAS GREEN, Ditto.
CAPEL LOFFT, Trofton.
GEO. ROGERS, Clk. Sproughton
JOS. B. SMYTH, Ditto.

Mr. GRIGBY, whom the County will long remember that it would be for the Room to contain the Number already affembled, the first Motion was that of Adjournment to the CAMPING GROOND, a large Field the property of Mr. ROUT, which had been used on other Public Meetings, and which, on application, he had obligingly consented should be used on this. Mr. GRIGBY then opened the Business of the Day, by reading the Advertisement. After which, Mr. Loss addressed to him most unnecessary, unconstitutional, and repugnant to the End proposed in the Title: by a most dangerous deviation from the fixed and known Law of Treason, which would introduce the utmost uncertainty and insecurity, and would end, if such a Bill could pass, in bringing under the Construction of Treason whatever the interests of a prevailing party, whatever a temporary fervour by whatever means exerted, whatever the delusion of the Moment, might wrest under the description of that destructive Charge.

That in the Sebitton Clause an undefined Crime was accompanied with a Punish ment, new in such application of it, and at the same

That in the SEBITION Clause an undefined Crime was accompanied with a Punishment, new in such application of it, and at the same time indeterminate, at the discretion of the Judge; a Punishment but very lately understood to be a part of the Scotch Law; and if a part of thest, most inauspiciously adopted into the English Parliamentary Code, considering the occasion and the Men against whom it had been introduced, and considering the Nature, the application, and the Effect of the Punishment; a Punishment which might fall on the wisest, best, and most virtuous: a Punishment, whatever the nominal Term might be, which falling upon Men, whose Fortunes and Health had perhaps been broken by a State Prosecution, would probably, indeed almost certainly, from the distance and other circumstances of their Exile, be equal to the duration of their Lives.

That the Public Meeting Bill, under the idea of "effectually preventing Seditions Meetings and Assemblies," against which there was no want of strong and efficacious Laws already,—struck at the Preedom and necessary use of Public Meetings of every kind, into which Political Discussion could in any degree enter: and invested the subordinate Magistracy, and any the smallest portion of that Magistracy, with an unbounded Power; totally inconfistent with the exercise of the effential Right of petitioning; the only ordinary and peaceable Resort of the People for the Removal or Prevention of bad Laws, bad measures of Government, and every other species of Public Grievance. That it equally struck at Public Information, as at public Redress: was contradictory to every Principle of the Revolution, and confequently not a proper security to a Government sounded on the Revolution, and constitutionally existing only by it's Principles. That to complete the System, if these Bills could be enacted, similar Licences might more easily, after such Precedents, and with perfect conformity of Principle and Design, be extended to the Press. But be this as it might, the Bills were in themselves sufficient for the utter extinction of all constitutional Freedom: incompatible with public and individual security; with civil, social, and natural Right.

But that he did not wish the Meeting to indee of these Bills on his or any Man's statement or opinion concerning them; he wished them

But that he did not wish the Meeting to judge of these Bills on his or any Man's statement or opinion concerning them: he wished them to be judged by their plain and direct meaning; as it would appear in the Bills themselves. The reading of them would certainly take time: but they would be willing to give that time (the last perhaps which the Laws would allow them) to a purpose so necessary to fair and consider the Enquiry: as nothing would be more unbecoming, more unworthy of a Public Meeting, and of the Principles and Motives of those who had called this, than to ask that they should express any sentiments concerning the Bills without having previously and fully heard them.

He therefore moved, that the BILLS be read. This being feconded, they were most distinctly read by Mr. GREEN, who had opposed the Petition at the former Meeting; and were heard with the greatest Order and Attention.

After which, Mr. Lofft again addressed the Meeting: and informed them, that he had a series of Resolves to propose for their Adoption or Rejection; according as they should believe the Facts, Principles, and Reasons they contained agreed with the Contents of the Two Bills, or disagreed with them. That if they should adopt the Resolves, he meant to propose a Petition containing the substance, and nearly the words of the Resolves; or of such part of them as they might be satisfied merited their Adoption. That there were other Petitions which would also probably be proposed to the Meeting. But that as the Resolves formed a connected series, it appeared requisite that they should be first read throughout: less any part of the Meeting might otherwise suffer an unjust difficulty by adopting some of the Resolves without having been frst apprized of the Nature and Tendency of the whole: That afterward he proposed to read each a second time: in order that the Question might be separately as a second time: in order that the Question might be separately as a second time; in order that the Question might be separately as a second time; in order that the Question might be separately as a second time; in order that the Question might be separately as a second time; in order that the Question might be separately as a second time; in order that the Question might be separately as a second time; in order that the Question might be separately as a second time; in order that the Question might be separately as a second time.

The Meeting certainly confifted of feveral Hundreds. Opinions varied confiderably of how many it might confift above 600.

COPY OF THE RESOLUTIONS.

RESOLVED,

1. That we heartly wish the safety and happiness of the King, and the preservation of the whole Constitution from violence and injury of whatever that, and by whomsoever attempted.

2. That we know, both from information and experience, that our Common and Statute Law have provided strong and effectual restraints against reason and treason and treason and treason and treason and statuses, as established at the Revolution.

3. That these Laws have been found sufficient in times of tumult and peril, very different from the present, and far more urgent in extent and degree danger; in times of actual rebellion within the Island, in support of pretensions to the Throne, which are now no longer to be apprehended.

4. That these laws have been found effectual in the present times, on all sudden and alarming emergencies, whenever they have been faithfully and resolutely executed.

5. That whom a suitable administration of them, no laws can be effectual; and the more severe, new, and intricate, the lcs likely to be executed.

6. That we concur in the sentiments expressed in an antient statute passed and similar and passed and annulled, and the Law of Treason reduced within its ancient channel, as marked and similared by the statute of the 25th Edw. III. that "the state of every King, Ruler, and covernor, standeth and consistent more assumed and similared by the statute of the 25th Edw. III. that "the state of every King, Ruler, and extreme punishment."

* I Mar. Anno 1553.

* I Mar. Anno 1553.

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7. That in all cases, and especially in cases where state delinquency may be charged, whether capital or of high misdemeanour, it is most desirable and requisite that the rule by which men must walk, at the peril of their Liberty, their Honour, their Lives, their personal and descendible Rights, should be clear and plain; for which the terms of a law ascertained and fixed by repeated solemn adjudications, must give the best, and indeed the only security adequate to the peculiar nature of such cases.

8. That we have attentively considered a Bill now depending in Parliament, entitled, "An Ass for the safety and preservation of his Majesty's Person and Covernment against treasonable and security of great numbers in various parts of the Kingdom, during the very short time since the said Bill and its companion Bill have been proposed, by Men of most acknowledged abilities and information in the Two Houses of Parliament, whom we believe in many instances, and in this especially, to have approved themselves the true friends of their Country and the Constitution, that such Bill is by no means necessary, or any way conducive to the safety of his Majesty; nor agreeable to the Principles of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

10. That particularly in that part which relates to the compassing and devising against the King, and to the compassing and devising of a constructive levying of War, there is a most dangerous and uncertain extension of the Law of Treasons; which we think not sounded on just principles of criminal Law, not supported by precedents from the best and most enlightened times, and not recommended by its success in those times when it was tried.

11. That in that clause which expected in indeterminate manner the crime of Sedition, there is annexed to the said crime, so indeterminately expressed, a new and unusual punishment, and that too at the discretion of the Judge; which will leave Juries at utter uncertainty respecting the kind as well as measure of punishment attendant upon conviction.—And as t

fo as to restore the Constitution to purity and vigour; and the speediest adoption of those means which may secure to his Majesty and the Nation the blessings of Peace.

14. That we find the right of petitioning expressly stated, asserted, and declared, in that Statute which our ancestors established as the basis and limit of the Government settled by the Revolution, and which is commonly known by the name of the Bill of Rights; being entitled, "An Act for declaring the Rights and Liberties of the Subject, and settling the Succession of the Grown," in which Statute, among other Articles "claimed, demanded, and insisted upon," and then solemnly acknowledged and declared as our undoubted Rights and Liberties, is this:

"That it is the Right of the Subject to petition the King, and that all commitments and prosecutions for such petitioning are illegal."

15. That wherever a Right is acknowledged and declared; the necessary means for the Exercise of that right are of course implied.

16. That in a settled and peaceable state of things, such as we wish always to see maintained for ourselves and our posterity, this right of petitioning against grievances and abuses, and for the attainment of seasonable remedies according to law, is the great and sole resort of The People: and hath often, and most beneficially been exerted in behalf of the Constitution, the public interests, liberties, security, and welfare; and hath often been, and we trust will yet be, a prevention of the greatest evils and calamities which otherwise would have fallen on the Kingdom and People.

17. That the Liberty of the Press, and the Liberty of Speech, we regard as essential to public Information, vital to our liberties and Constitution, and proper to our nature, as rational and social beings.

18. That we have attentively considered the other subject of this Meeting, a Bill entitled "A Bill for the more effectually preventing Seditious Meetings and Afsemblies."

19. That we are of opinion the said Bill engrafts the provisions of the Riot Act, a

18. That we have attentively confidered the other subject of this Meeting, a Bill entitled "A Bill for the more effectually preventing Seditious Meetings and Assemblers."

19. That we are of opinion the said Bill engrafts the provisions of the Riot Act, adapted to cases of violence and extreme necessity, on cases and cocurrences not of that necessity; and so as to be applicable, and in danger of being applied to cases of no necessity, and where there may be no ground of proper interference at all.

20. That we think the power given to the Magistrate, to arrest on the specific proper interference at all.

21. That the other power, of dissolving and dispersing a whole assembler worked, and is incompatible with the necessary freedom of speech, without which no public Meeting can be properly and beneficially held.

21. That the other power, of dissolving and dispersing a whole assembler where the specific proper necessary, upon the mere declaration of two Justices, or of an Under-sherist and one Justice, that "point circumssarse" render the farther continuance of the meeting "dangerous to the public peace," is an enormous power; and such as, if possibly it can assume the form of law, will render the exercise of the right of lawfully assembling and petitioning, utterly precarious and despised.

22. That the power of putting all places of political lecture and debate, whether solely or partly used for that purpose, where money is received for admission, under licence t, for such term, and on such conditions, as justices shall prescribe, and those revocable at pleasure, and subjecting all places, where such meetings may be suspected, to visitation and search by a justice, strikes at the root of a very general mode of rational satisfaction and information, of which the abuses, where and for far as they exist, were open and accessible to the coercion of the substitution and substitution and substitutions, to be preferibed by the licensers, and revocable at their pleasure, we observe, that the faid clause is worded with

The following is the Petition which Mr. Lofft meant to have moved. To the Honourable the COMMONS of GREAT BRITAIN in Parliament affembled.

The PETITION of the underligned Freeholders and Inhabitants of the County of SUFFOLK, Sheweth,

That your Petitioners most sincerely wish the safety of his Majesty's Person, the preservation of Order and good Government, and the security of the whole Constitution against violence and injury of whatever kind.

Your Petitioners do therefore most earnestly request, that the sullest Consideration may be given to two Bills now depending in Parliament: the one entitled, "An Ast for the safety and preservation of his Majesty's Person and Government against treasonable and seditious Practices and Attempts," and the other, "A Bill for the more effectually preventing Seditious Meetings and Assembles."

The Title of these Bulls your Petitioners observe to contain very popular and describe objects.

But they conceive such objects to be best and only attainable by a due execution of the substituting Laws; by good measures of Government; by the disson of the means of Public Information; by a well considered Removal of those Abuses, which have separated the Practice from the Spirit of the Constitution; by a benevolent and provident attention to the distresses, which have separated the Practice from the Spirit of the Constitution; by a benevolent and provident attention to the distresses, of Pasce.

That, as far as Laws can be effectual, your Petitioners conceive the substituting Laws are already so, against Treason and treasonable Attempts; against Sedition; against tumultuous and unlawful Assembles:—but that, concurring in the sentiment of the autient Statutes, by which, in successive times, certain newly introduced Treasons were abrogated and annulled, and the Law of Treason reduced within its antient Channel, as marked and limited by the 25 Edw. III. they seel great concern at the departure from those Limits, by the introduction of a most dangerous and uncertain extension of Treason, sounded on an undefined compassing and devising against the King, and an undefined compassing and devising of a constructive of War; and, at the same time, an indeterminate description of the Crime of Sedition, accompanied by a new, inde

Punishment.

And this departure from the known description of Treason, they think neither warranted in Principle, nor supported by good Precedent, nor recommended by any beneficial experience.

The Treason part as it stood originally, it has since been still more enlarged, is copied from 13 Car. II. c. Anno 1660. what is called 13 Car. is the first

of his actual reign.

† In vain it has been contended that in the exercise of this discretion the Magistrate would be amenable to Law, and punishable in case of abuse of it. The discretion is so wide, and its object so indeterminate, that it would be difficult indeed to prove an abuse of it, however real and great, by such legal evidence as would be requisite to conviction. And be this as it may, between the Justice and the Individual, (to say nothing of the inconvenience and disadvantages of the contest) it is little or nothing to the Public. With the Public the true consideration is, that the Proceedings of every Meeting upon great and general questions would be liable to be interrupted and defeated by indefinite and discretionary power in a single person. And to this Mischief it suffices that the power be exercised, whatever subsequent examination of its exercise may or may not arise in a Court of Law. Indeed it may be justly said that the mischief is done by the very giving of the power, whether exercised or not: since from the moment it exists as a part of the Public Law, every Public Meeting on Political Subjects, Parliament excepted, is impaired in its necessary Freedom by the very liability to the exercise of such a power.

Law, every Phone Meeting on Pointeal Subjects, Parhament excepted, is impacted in the prohibition of political Lecture and Debate, and will probably reduce the Societies which may chie to act under them to theharmles ifrivolity of fuch Questions as are sometimes advertised, alike remote from Politics and from rationality, it is remarkable this part of the Bill is copied, with little alteration, from an expressly probibitory Bill against Sunday Evening Societies, which passed with less confideration than it merited, in the year 1781, (21 G. III. c. 49.) under the title of "An Act to prevent certain Abuser and Prefanation of the Lord's Day, commonly called Sunday."

They think it—with the introduction of other indeterminate Charges, by which State Delinquency would hereafter be imputable and triable, and the Lives, Honour, Liberty, personal and descendible Rights, of Men accustomed and entitled to live under a known Rule of Law, liable to brought in Peril—utterly unnecessary and inexpedient; by no means conducive to the safety of his Majesty's Person and Government; and incompatible with the Principles of the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

Your Petitioners regard the Right of Petitioning the King, and, by parity of Reason, both, or either, of the two Houses of Parliament, as their necessary, undoubted, and perpetual Right; affected, recognized and declared by that Statute, on which their Ancestors established the Base and Limit of Government, as settled by the Revolution,—the Bill of Rights.

They know, that when a Right is acknowledged and declared, the necessary means to the exercise of that Right, are, of course and necessity, implied.

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They know, that when a Right is acknowledged and declared, the necessary means to the exercise of that Right, are, of course and necessity, implied.

But they seel, that the Power given of Arrest, as often as a Magistrate should declare an ill Opinion of the nature and tendency of a Discourse of any person speaking at a County or other Public Meeting, and that he thinks the same incites to a contempt of the established Government and Constitution,—though the same may not be treasonable or feditious, nor liable to Arrest or Restraint, by any substituted inconsistent with the Freedom of Speech, without which no County or other Public Meeting can be properly and heneficially holden; and consequently repugnant to the exercise of the Right of deliberating, discussing, and petitioning at such Meetings; which hath often, and most beneficially, been exerted in support of the Constitution, the Public Interests, Liberty, Security, and Welfare, and hath often been, and, we trust, will yet be, the prevention of the greatest calamities to the Kingdom and People.

Your Petitioners represent farther, that the Power given by the same Bill to two Justices, or an Under Sheriss and one Justice, to dissolve and disperse a County or other Public Meeting, however regularly convened, however peaceable and orderly, however necessary, on the mere Declaration, that "special circumssarces is in their opinion, the continuance of such Meeting dangerous to the Public Peace," is an enormous Power; and such as would render the exercise of the Right of lawfully assembling and petitioning utterly precarious and despised.

They never can forget, that the Liberty of the Press and the Freedom of Speech are effential to Public Information, vital to their Liberties and Constitution, and proper to their Nature, as rational and social Beings.

But they observe, that a Clause in the Bill against which they now petition, subjects the Liberty of political Lecture and Debate, in Places where money is received for admission, to Licences for a certain space

they notice a latitude and obtainly in this Shade, by public Meetings.

But, independent of these considerations, they think the two Bills, against which, as great numbers have been already in every part of the kingdom, they are now Petitioners, contain, in their certain and direct purport, the clearest and most urgent motives for opposing them by all legal and constitutional means.

legal and constitutional means.

With respect to the Duration of the two Bills, they observe the former to be expressly limited "during his Majesty's Life, and for the Session after the Demise of the Crown:"—this they think inconsistent with the considence and assession uniformly expressed by the People, and so repeatedly and recently acknowledged by his Majesty; and, otherwise, totally unnecessary and unsuitable.

The latter, from different Clauses, and the Form of the concluding Clause, appears to be intended for at least several years:—they now understand it to be three, with a space beyond sufficient to provide for its continuance. And if such a Bill can passand remain for three years, they fear it may be much less difficult to continue it hereafter.

But the most temporary continuance that could have been assigned would not have reconciled the Judgment or the Feelings of your Petitioners

But the most temporary continuance that could have been affigned would not have reconciled the Judgment or the Feelings of your Petitioners

They do not state their Objections on a vague apprehension of suggested tendencies: but on attentive Consideration of the Contents of the two Bills; which they earnestly pray and hope that, on due deliberation, the wisdom of your honourable House, and your attention to the sentiments and wishes of The People, will not suffer to pass into Law.

The Petition which was adopted by the Meeting vas that which had been previously adopted by the Inhabitants of Bury. And is in

To the Honourable the CCMMONS of GREAT BRITAIN, in Parliament affembled.

The Humble PETITION of the underfigned FREEHOLDERS and INHABITANTS of the County of SUFFOLK. Sheweth,
THAT your Petitioners approach this Honourable Toufe with fentiments of unfeigned attachment to the principles of the Constitution established by the glorious Revolution of 1688.

That your Petitioners have feen with indignation the penciples of that Constitution violated by the atrocious infult lately offered to the person of

But that your Petitioners view with the most ferious airm the introduction of Two Bills into Parliament, the one entitled, "An Act for the Safety and Preservation of his Majesty's Person and Government against treasonable and seditious Practices and Attempts;" the other, "An Act for the more effectually preventing seditious Meetings and Affemblies;" the obvious tendency of which is to invest the Magistrates with a new and arbitrary power, to introduce new penal Laws and constructive Treasons, and to build on the ruins of our dearest rights a system incompatible any free Constantion whatever.

any free Constitution whatever.

Your Petitioners consider the said Bills as unnecssary, impolitic, and unconstitutional. Unnecessary, because the existing laws are adea swell to the detection as to the punishment of offinders. Impolitic, because they will lessen that considence which should subsist between
ceople and their Representatives, and that respect which is due to the Magistrates and the Laws. And Unconstitutional, because they tend to
affrate the provisions of the Bill of Rights; to deprive he People of the privileges of Petition and Remonstrance; to prevent this Honourable
House from being informed of the wishes of its Constituers; to extend the influence of the Executive Power; and by restraining the constitutional
exercise of political discussion, to surrender into its hands he bulwarks of popular Liberty.

Therefore your Petitioners most humbly intreat this Honourable House not to permit the said Bills to become the laws of the realm.

That your Petitioners, convinced that the present approachions of public danger arise more from the continuance of a disastrous Warthan from
any other cause, are of opinion, that the Restoration of Pece, by lessening the public burdens, will better tend to allay popular discontent than the
most coercive Regulations; they therefore humbly hope at this Honourable House will use its best exertions to obtain a Termination of Hossilies, as the most certain means of preserving internal transmillity.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, shall ear pray, &c. &c.

[The Petitionis stated to have received 1300 fignatures.]

Refolved, That the Right Hon. CHARLES JAMES FOX, RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN, Efq. and JAMES MARTIN, Efq. be requested to present

Reloved, That the Right Hon. CHARLES JASES TO A STATE TO A STATE OF THE RESIDENCE OF PARLES AND ASSESSED TO A STATE OF THE RIGHT HON. CHARLES JASES TO A STATE OF THE RIGHT HON. CHARLES JASES TO A STATE OF THE RIGHT HON. CHARLES JASES TO A STATE OF THE RIGHT HON. CHARLES JASES JASES TO A STATE OF THE RIGHT HON. CHARLES JASES JASE Cause of calling this Meeting.

That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to the Chair an for his conduct in the Chair.

This special circumstance Clause was at last filently withdrawn, after hints that the force of the Public Sentiment, in and out of Parliment, was reluctantly obeyed.

† This Clause too has been altered in the Committee; but the Bill, after all the negative advantages it has gained from Opposition, remains such, that none but its Framers and Supporters will claim the mirit of it. The mischie's of which it is divested, however unwillingly laid aside, were super-C. L. 18 Dec. 1795.



. replay. 18 JA 53